

The Evils of Birth-Control

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THE birth-control movement is a protest against laws, almost universal throughout the United States, which prohibit giving information on the methods of preventing conception. Under these laws, it is illegal for a physician or any other person to impart information on this subject. Advocates of birth-control insist that this deprives people of the right of voluntary parenthood and that, as the result, children are born unwished for; that this works a great wrong, especially among the poor and ignorant in the community. Large families among the laboring classes are a severe burden, they say, and keep such families down to low living standards, and it would be better for the parents, for the children, and for the State, if such undesired children were not born. Ignorance of methods of birth-control affects the State unfavorably. Those who are socially and economically prosperous are reducing their births through the use of contraceptive methods, while the poor and ignorant still have large families. It is further claimed that ignorance of contraceptive methods keeps young people from marrying because they cannot undertake to support a family on their limited incomes. Finally, birth-control advocates say the result is much sex irregularity and venereal disease. The birth-control movement thus rests on the assumption that a free and wider practice of its doctrines would reduce poverty, immorality, and venereal disease and would raise the physical standard of the race.

These are broad claims and will receive our attention in the course of this paper. At the present moment I

wish to address myself to the practical question which is involved, namely, whether the law prohibiting instruction in birth-control* shall be continued on our statute books or not. This has exercised both the advocates of the movement and their opponents more than any other feature, and we should dispose of it before we proceed with what I believe to be the much more important and larger question which is at bottom involved, namely, the subject of population and parenthood and the attitude which thinking people should have toward it.

The principle behind the prohibition of birth-control instruction is that contraceptive methods are destructive to the best interests of the State and that they are immoral in effect, because detrimental to the individuals who practise them. The State looks to its own perpetuation, and anything which endangers that is illegal. Birth-control implies cohabitation divorced from procreation. The moral sense of the community looks upon this as unnatural; in fact, as a grave perversion of function, and therefore to be prevented. The law stamps the disapproval of the community upon such conduct. Furthermore, it is assumed that the law acts as a restraint upon the appetites of persons, especially the unmarried who might otherwise gratify their desires to their own and the community's detriment. Such a deterrent safeguards the integrity of the family, upon which the welfare of the State depends.

I believe that I have stated the case for the State without bias. On the other hand, it should be frankly admitted that birth-control is now very widely employed and by all classes of society. The well-to-do practise it, as is openly admitted by almost every one and as is eloquently demonstrated by their very low birth-rate. The law is honored more in the breach than in the observance. Some doctors do impart such information in spite of the law and irrespective of the social consequences of such instruction. Other physicians, restrained by the law, may remain silent in cases where, in their judgment, it would be better that information on birth-control

*The law as it stands declares contraceptive information to be indecent and classes it with the circulation of obscene literature, pornographic pictures, and instruction in abortion.

should be given to prevent hardship and suffering. A law which is not enforced and which cannot be enforced is of little service. It undermines respect for law in general.

Nor does the law, as we now have it, truly represent the community attitude on this subject. The law is entirely negative. It is not a positive guide to what the best interests of the community require. I believe, therefore, that whatever be the merits of the opposition to a repeal of the existing statutes, all might well agree to an amendment which would permit properly qualified physicians to impart information to married people in such cases where, in their judgment, the interests of society would not suffer from this instruction. Little, if anything, would be lost to the community, and with the legal restriction out of the way we would be in a better position to consider the questions of population and of parenthood in a constructive and sober manner in order to develop a public point of view.*

BIRTH-CONTROL AND THE POPULATION PROBLEM.

The birth-control movement assumes that the world suffers from overpopulation and that the first thing to do to put the world in order is to decrease the birth-rate. This is implied in everything that has been written by the advocates of birth-control. The birth-rate is, after all, a relative value, and whether it is high or low depends upon a standard. A good fixed point for our discussion is such a birth-rate as will maintain the population at a fixed level, that is, neither increase it nor decrease it in the course of a generation. In a previous technical study of this question, I have shown that, under present conditions of the death-rate, it requires an average of close to four children per family to keep the population stationary. Two children reaching maturity are required to replace their parents, and because of the high mortality in infancy and early childhood and because so many people do not marry, it requires an average of nearly

*Regarding the opinion expressed in this paragraph, both the natural law and the Catholic Church positively forbid, of course, all kinds of "birth-control" except that practised by abstaining voluntarily from the use of marriage.—Editor CATHOLIC MIND.

four children per completed family to make a new generation as large as the old. An average of one, two, or even three children per family, therefore, means a loss in population; an average of five or six children means an increase in the population.

I wonder whether you realize what the true facts of the birth-rate are in the United States at the present time, or what they have been in the last ten years. Do you know that the birth-rate in the United States is this year about what it was in France before the war? The birth-rate in New York is around 20 per 1,000 of population. This represents a drop of about 20 per cent in four or five years. The rate has been declining for a number of years, but never so rapidly as it has recently. We have now reached the point where one baby is born each year to every tenth family. Does this strike you as an excessive birth-rate? Do we need more birth-control? How many people in this room have families of four children? How many families do you know where there are four children? It is one of the most striking facts in our social life that the persons upon whom the public opinion and constructive effort of our country depend are raising families of less than four children. Special studies which have been made among many groups of persons such as college professors, teachers in schools, business people of good position, and among large groups of the native-born of native parentage, demonstrate an extraordinarily low average number of children per completed family. There is only one conclusion to be drawn: these groups are not reproducing themselves. These people and stocks are quickly dying out and their place is being taken by a new generation who are the offspring of our fertile immigrants. Is this entirely satisfactory to you or does it fill you with forebodings as to the welfare of our country? The greatness and worth of the nation will never be more or less than that of its people. Have you no reservations as to the power for self-government of the newcomers or as to their capacity to carry on the traditions of America for ourselves and among the nations of the world? It is as clear as anything can be that we are now remaking the stock out of which the new America will arise. We had reason to feel safe in the

past. I humbly raise the question as to the future. Whether we like it or not, the people of America will look different, act differently, and be different from those who made our country great. And all this because of the facts of reproduction and heredity.

The advocates of birth-control, somewhat frightened at this picture, direct their propaganda against the high birth-rate of the immigrant. They point to the individual family, still unadjusted to American conditions, with its large number of children, and insist that for them birth-control must become available. I ask you whether this condition, however distressing may be the circumstances, is half so serious as that which is rarely considered and against which no propaganda is directed, namely, the thousands and tens of thousands of families where there is no maladjustment, nor poverty, nor ignorance; where parents are by birth and tradition and capacity able to bring into the world and raise wholesome, healthy offspring to do the world's work, and where there are either no children or but one or two children. I insist that the present emphasis is all wrong. It is infinitely more important that society shall be maintained and strengthened by the birth and growth of healthy, productive, and able people than that individual cases of hardship resulting from oversized families shall be alleviated, desirable as that may be.

THE FALLING BIRTH-RATE IN EUROPE.

If I may digress a bit, I would discuss the condition of the birth-rate in Europe. The situation is, of course, very much worse than in the United States. Birth-control propaganda has, in one form or another, been carried on for about a century and was very actively spread during the two or three decades prior to the Great War. Of all the countries, France probably suffered most from this doctrine, the practice of contraception being very widely diffused in the population. For a year or two prior to 1914, France was already suffering from depopulation, that is, from an excess of deaths over births. The facts called for the most anxious activity of the statesmen of that country who saw a national menace of the first order in the facts of a

dwindling population. Commissions were appointed to study the question. Projects of law were being drawn up to check the advocates of birth-control, inflicting heavy penalties on those propagating this doctrine. It was no longer an academic question with France; it was a challenge whether France would survive. Then came the war with its sacrifices, trials, and losses. Close to 1,500,000 men of France, the flower of its youth, made the great sacrifice on the field. But an even larger number of potential men and women were lost to France because during the period of the war the birth-rate fell more than one-half from its previously lowest point. During the last year of the war, the birth-rate of France was about nine per thousand, with the death-rate about three times as high. This high rate was due in part to the losses from influenza which, like war, removed the cream of the population, men and women at the most active ages of life, the potential and actual parents of the present generation.

The most distressing problem of France today is its problem of population. The war and the influenza have left France with an abnormally high proportion of old people and a correspondingly low proportion of young lives upon whom the burden of carrying forward the work and civilization of France rests. An advocate of birth-control in France would enjoy short shrift today. I believe that the French have learned their lesson. When I was in Paris last year, I heard from every quarter that a new spirit had arisen and that it would become fashionable for Frenchmen to raise large families "*pour la France.*" The battle for France is far from over; the fight is still being fought in the cradles just as actively as it was on the battlefield, only that the enemy is much more subtle, and treason goes unpunished.

For the first time in its modern history, England reached a point recently when her birth-rate was less than her death-rate. That was the situation at the end of last year and the beginning of this. The influenza epidemic was largely responsible, but the low birth-rate also played its part. For 1918, it was 17.7 per 1,000 as against 23.8 per 1,000 in 1914. One can always rely on the good sense of the English to discern a national situa-

tion which calls for positive and constructive conduct in the national defense.

• Probably the very worst conditions as to birth-rate which came to my attention on the other side, during a rather remarkable opportunity to study the population question at the end of the war, was in Serbia. Terrible as were the physical conditions of that country, which had been drained of every resource by the German, Austrian, and Bulgar invader, the condition which perplexed and distressed the statesmen of that country more than anything else was the effect of the war on their birth-rate. There were hardly any babies born in Serbia during the period of the war. As Colonel Folks and our party moved up from the Greek border on the south to Belgrade on the north, we were impressed with the utter desolation of a nation that had no babies. A four years' crop of children was lacking. That will mean empty schools a few years hence; it will mean few or no marriages twenty years hence; it will mean, again, few or no births in the next generation, until the post-war babies have grown up and have taken their proper places as parents. Unless I am very much mistaken, Europe is through, for some time at least, with the pernicious doctrine that it has too many people and that it needs fewer children.

In our country, at least, it may be said that we are far from having reached the point of saturation of population. To talk of overpopulation in the United States is to talk nonsense. There is, of course, overcrowding in our cities, but there are the rich prairies and the fertile valleys waiting for the hand of man to bring forth a rich harvest, not only for our own people but for the unhappy, war-stricken world. Our natural resources have been scarcely scratched and our human concentration per square mile is among the lowest in the world. We are, today, the hope of the world and shall long continue to be so. It is not for ourselves alone that we must be concerned. Food, coal and iron, and manufactured goods must go to the stricken nations of Europe, but more than this, we must send out good cheer and hope to these people who now think of the world as the invention of the devil. There is only one way to do this and to save

civilization. It is to preserve the spirit of youth. Our families must bear children that there may be life and cheer and joy and hope in our midst. An atmosphere of growing, abounding youth in our homes will reflect itself in a healthy national spirit and in our inspiring message to the world. Such a message will be totally different from that which would come from a nation of few children, where the average age of the population is high, and where there is a large and growing preponderance of old women.

BIRTH-CONTROL AND THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY.

The propagandists of birth-control and of birth-reduction have also preached that a widespread acceptance of their gospel will solve or at least help solve the problem of poverty. It is the size of a poor man's family that makes him poor and keeps him poor, they say. In a small family, the little you have will be enough. The extreme form of this doctrine came to my attention recently in a paper by Dr. Millard, who, speaking of England, says: "The prosperity of this country is absolutely dependent upon an abundant supply of cheap coal; the more rapidly the population of this country increases, the sooner will a menacing exhaustion of our coal fields manifest itself." Here we have a beautiful *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole doctrine. It is fortunate to have so clear a statement of an impossible position. The aim and end of human life is then, not human life itself but the preservation of the coal supply. We live for coal and not coal for us. In its less absurd form, the doctrine is a plea for more things, for more money, for more pleasure as against more healthy, worthy people who can create and enjoy things, money, and pleasure. It is a simple confusion of means and ends which one would not expect a schoolboy to fall into. But even distinguished physicians sometimes pride themselves on the fact that they are not philosophers or logicians.

If there is poverty and misery in the world, and there is a great deal of it, the way to attack poverty and misery is not by destroying mankind and its civilization. There are better and more direct ways. Poverty may be reduced by destroying exploitation of man by man, and we are destroying it slowly but surely. Poverty may be des-

troyed by training people to be more productive in industry, by developing their skill and character, and by making them more ambitious for attainment, and we are learning all the time to do that better. Poverty may be reduced by checking the birth of incompetents, of degenerates, of defectives, through segregation and control of the prospective parents of such offspring. Birth-control, through the spread of contraceptive knowledge, will hardly help in such cases. It will require recognition of the undesirable stocks, their forcible detention, and sex segregation by the State to accomplish this result. The poverty and misery which we see about us is largely the result of maladjustment in a highly complex society. The proper answer is not to reduce the number of people indiscriminately and to quiet discontent with a false sense of security. Much more will be accomplished by directing an attack on poverty, first by impartially determining, then by checking, its true causes. Healthy men always produce more wealth than they consume. The wealth of the world, in fact, is cumulative. We have not only our own production, but all that which has gone before. Each new generation can, therefore, be more numerous than its predecessor. We are far from having reached our limit. To admit that we have is to put ourselves down as exhausted, as played out. No, birth-reduction is no cure for poverty. It would stop our constructive effort at removing the causes of poverty and we would end by adding to our poverty of things the much worse poverty of spirit.

BIRTH-CONTROL AND VENEREAL DISEASES.

Another claim of the advocates of birth-control, to which we have already referred, is that a wider use of contraceptives would result in a reduction of immorality and of venereal disease. It is difficult to see how they come to such a conclusion. Now and then we find some of their more cautious supporters distinctly worried over the possibilities that are involved in the more general practice of their propaganda. They seem to realize that there will be a great temptation thrown in the path of young people to which many will succumb. At the present time there is, at least, the deterrent of the natural consequences of their act. With birth-control knowledge

universal, that deterrent is removed and promiscuity may become much more general because much safer. This is a phase of the subject in which I suppose the American Social Hygiene Association is most interested and is perhaps the reason why you have invited me to make this address. According to my view, the strength of your association should be thrown against this propaganda, although, as I said at the outset, it will not be necessary to oppose the amendment of the present anti-birth-control law. My reason for this view is the experience of other countries with birth-control. Nowhere in the world has this been practised as in France nor for a longer time, and we find, side by side with the lowest birth-rate in the world, one of the highest death-rates from venereal disease and those associated conditions which show venereal infection. It is not uncommon to find the very best medical writers of France referring to syphilis as the first cause of death in France. Such was the statement of Dr. Doyen at a meeting in the Academy of Medicine in Paris some years ago. The charge has been repeated many times. The vital statistics of France are too indifferently constructed to show how serious this situation is, but every one who has been in France knows how widespread the venereal diseases are. The situation could hardly be worse, yet we are told that the way to reduce venereal disease is to increase birth-control.

So much for the negative side of the subject. I hope it is clear to you that little that is useful may be expected from the operation of the present law and even less from the free sway of the birth-control propaganda, an unhealthy and blind delusion into which some well-meaning but uninstructed people have fallen. What is called for in the circumstances is a clear-cut, positive doctrine on population and parenthood which people may not only understand and believe but follow. This can be no lukewarm proposition of academic interest. We are concerned with the most vital thing in the world and must approach the matter in this spirit. We must, therefore, get down to fundamentals and follow where they lead us.

In the first place, I can see no escape in any reasonable social philosophy from the conclusion that it is the duty of individuals in a society to preserve, improve, and per-

petuate it. Society cannot sanely discuss its own dissolution any more than an individual can sanely determine his own destruction. It must continue and grow richer in content of lives and of tradition. Tradition is an epitome of all that has gone before; lives carry our tradition forward into the future; together, they make up the stream of civilization. Whatever interferes with this stream or blocks its course, is antisocial and must be checked. This is axiomatic. To deny this is to remove all purpose and rationality from existence. If the perpetuation and enrichment of civilization is not the aim of our existence, then there can be no worthy aim and the sooner we stop the grim comedy the better.

In line with this thought, I would make a number of suggestions toward building up a positive and constructive social program on the population question.

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM.

In the first place, the State must radically revise the education of both its boys and its girls. Our system of education must inculcate national ideals. It is not enough for education to insure efficiency; we must also develop enthusiasms for the common good. Our young men and women must be taught to realize early that we do not live for ourselves alone. The education of our women is especially faulty in this regard. Our schools and colleges with few exceptions direct the thoughts and energies of our girls away from normal home life. Our girls graduate from school and college often without any instruction in what will prepare them to be good mothers and wives. The old virtues of womanhood need restatement today; for whatever else women learn in the school, they must be educated for their place as mothers. A democratic education must make sufficient provision for this primary function.

The State must also put a premium upon childbearing. The bearing and rearing of children is costly, both in energy and in funds, and acts as a check on personal ambition and on the enjoyment of the freedom and pleasures of social life. Success as a mother is, in the majority of cases, at the expense of achievement in other fields. The State should reward either substantially or with esteem the women who are willing to bring up families

of normal size. It may be found expedient to encourage parenthood by fixing exemption from taxes, municipal, State and Federal, on the basis of the size of the family. This principle has already been acknowledged in our Federal tax system. It needs to be largely extended and coupled with much heavier rates of taxation for the unmarried.

But, at bottom, the evil I have described is the result of individual selfishness. An increasing number of men and women do not assume the marital state or, when married, do not raise a family of children because they prefer only to live better than their forebears and to spend more on themselves than would be possible if they had children to raise and educate. The appeal must, therefore, be made to the religious impulse in our individual lives. It will require all the religious power latent in our people to set us right. We must learn to realize clearly our relation to the community about us and the obligations which this relationship involves. The problem of the size of the family, like a whole host of other important social questions, will be solved only when men realize the holy purpose of life, that we are here to add to the sum total of the common good; in a word, that we must leave the world better than we have found it.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the need for *birth-release* among the healthy and normal people of our country as a primary national duty. Such release must be conscious and deliberate, the act of will of free individuals who thus express a highly moral purpose.

Birth-Control and the Natural Law

JOHN DANIHY, S.J.

From the Denver "Catholic Register."

WHO has the right to control birth? To anyone who believes in God, the answer is very simple. God alone has that right. He, who founded the order of nature and determined how the human race should be continued, He alone has the right to determine how that law shall be obeyed, and He has written His law into the nature of man.

Our skeptical friend does not admit God, but he cannot deny nature, and the natural law, which is imprinted in every man's mind, is clear enough on this subject. No man or woman is forced to enter matrimony; but, if, of their own free will, that responsibility is assumed, every man and woman is bound to live up to its obligations.

The primary end of matrimony is the propagation of the human race, by bringing forth and educating children. The secondary end is the comfort and happiness which come from married life. The fundamental error of Mr. George Bernard Shaw's article is his utter ignoring of the primary end of matrimony.

This fundamental error degrades the relation of men and women in matrimony, to the state of the beasts of the field. It considers the birth of a child a question of expediency, to be measured by the temporal and merely physical interests of its possible parents. It makes marriage a mere cloak for the legalized indulgence of passion. In this latter view, it is not really fair to the beast to say that men and women who measure their matrimonial relations by their lustful desires and ignore the consequences, are on the plane of the animal.

Unmarried persons who are unwilling to assume the burden of parenthood are perfectly free to remain in their present state. Married persons, who do not wish children, are perfectly free to refrain from the exercise of marital relations by mutual consent. To indulge in those relations and to take measures that life will not result, is a frustration of the primary end of matrimony, and is therefore directly against the natural law. As Dr. Tenison in Kathleen Norris's "Mother" says:

In these days, when women just serenely ignore the question of children, or at most, as a special concession, bring up one or two, just the one or two whose expenses can be comfortably met, there's something magnificent in a woman who begins eight destinies instead of one. * * * Responsibility—that's what these other women say they are afraid of, but it seems to me, there's no responsibility like that of decreeing that young lives simply shall not be. * * * There's a higher tribunal than the social tribunal of this world, after all.

The father or mother who smothers, or strangles, a child is guilty of murder, and the fact that the child

is only one hour, or twenty years old, does not mitigate the crime. The reason for this, both in ethics and law, is the right of the child to live and the absence of authority on the part of parents, as parents, to deny or frustrate that right. That right to life on the part of the child is inherent in life, and therefore, exists at the very moment of life, and is as binding weeks or even months before birth as it is after the child has been born.

The trouble with Mr. Shaw, and others of his like, is that they do not know the meaning of the word *morality*. The question of right and wrong is always left out of consideration, and the matter of the number of children, according to them, is to be measured by the convenience, material interests, or the mere desire of their parents. We can see this from the arguments they advance.

Their chief argument is that a large family is a handicap to the parents. Even if this were true, the parents accepted that handicap when they entered upon the marital relations.

Again it is urged that two or three children can be given a better chance in life than seven or eight. This argument, if it means anything, means that five or six ought to be destroyed in order that two or three remaining may be better brought up. If this reasoning were true, it could be pushed to some very startling conclusions.

Let us suppose a family of eight is brought into the world, under circumstances which seem to promise every chance for their proper bringing up. Then financial reverses come, and the parents cannot possibly take care of more than two. Shall they kill the other six? Even George Bernard Shaw would hardly wish to defend his own logic in such a case.

In all discussions on this subject, by men of the Shaw stamp, we are continually hearing of the narrowness of the Catholic view. The treatment of this question is entirely free from religious tenets. It is not a question of this, that or the other doctrine, but merely a question of the natural law, which is equally binding on every human being, and any sane discussion of it must be from this standpoint.

The right of the child to life, forever disposes of the parents' right to destroy that life. The primary end of matrimony forbids any method of preventing life on the part of the parents, who are exercising their rights as married people. The old principle, "Thou shalt not do evil that good may come of it," puts the moral question above all considerations of purely physical or economical welfare.

Catholicism and Science

From the "Monitor."

A GERMAN Protestant writer, named Dennert, has made an exhaustive study of the religious opinions of 300 famous savants. The most illustrious names that have appeared during three centuries have been selected; men principally distinguished in the natural sciences—botany, geology, etc. Dr. Dennert's work has been published at Berlin. It is an interesting record.

For the first period of his investigations, including the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the author cites the names of eighty-two men, noted leaders in their particular domain, seventy-nine of whom were believers in Christianity. Among these are Newton, Huyghens, Leibnitz, Gallileo, and Copernicus.

In the second period, the eighteenth century, fifty-five names are given—five infidels, eleven whose religious views are unknown, while thirty-nine admitted the existence of God, of the soul, and of revelation. We may remark among the most illustrious of these last the names of Merschel, Linnaeus, Werner, Boerhaave and Bradley.

The third period embraces the nineteenth century. Here the number of savants is considerably increased. Dr. Dennert cites 163 illustrious names; of this number 124 were believers, twenty-two held indefinite religious opinions, while only twelve were infidels. Among the latter are the names of such materialists as Tyndall, Huxley and Vogt; the indefinites number Arago, La Place and Darwin.

While Dr. Dennert places the latter among the unbelieving fraternity, it is well to note that Darwin never

declared himself a materialist. His views on God and immortality deserve to be quoted here. He says:

I have never been an atheist, in the sense of denying the existence of God . . . The question whether there exists a Creator has been answered in the affirmative by some of the best intellects that ever existed . . . An omniscient Creator must have foreseen every consequence which results from the law imposed by Him . . . An Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator ordains everything and foresees everything ("Animals and Plants," etc., III., 431.) With respect to immortality, nothing shows me how strong and almost instinctive a belief it is, as the consideration . . . that all sentient beings are doomed to annihilation after such long continued progress. To those who admit the immortality of the soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful.

To Herbert Spencer, the most certain of all truths was the existence of an inscrutable power in which we live and move and have our being. To quote his words:

Over and over again it has been shown that by Persistence of Force is meant the Persistence of some Power, the nature of which remains inconceivable, and to which no limits of time or space can be imagined, and which works in us certain effects; and though this power universally manifests to us, the phenomena alike in all surrounding worlds and in ourselves, the Power in which we live and move and have our being—this Power is and ever must remain, inscrutable, yet the existence of this inscrutable Power is almost certain of all truths.

Among modern scientists of unswerving Christian Faith are numbered Hermite, Pasteur, Huay, Faraday, J. B. Dumas, Le Verrier, Cauchy, Ampere, Volta and many others. In fine, among the three hundred names collected by Dr. Dennert, there are about 242 with religious convictions, repudiating the doctrine of materialism, and loudly proclaiming the harmony between Faith and Science. As expressing the sentiments of innumerable Catholic scientists, we may quote a declaration of the illustrious Cauchy, one of the greatest mathematicians the world has ever seen:

I am a Christian—that is to say, I believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ with Copernicus, Descartes, Newton, Liebnitz, Pascal, Grimaldi, Euler, Boscovich; with all the great astronomers, all the great physicians, all the great geométricians of past centuries. I am even a Catholic; and if I am asked I shall willingly give my reasons. It will be seen that my convictions are the result, not of prejudices

imbibed from my birth, but of a thorough examination. I am a sincere Catholic, as were Corneille and Racine, La Bruyere, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fenelon; as have been and still are a large number of the most distinguished men of our age—those who do most honor to science, philosophy, and literature, who have contributed most to the glory of our academies. I share the profound convictions manifested, in their spoken and written words, by so many savants of the first rank—Hauy, Laëhnec, Ampere, Coriolis. And if I avoid naming these who remain, I can say at least that I loved to discern all the nobility, all the generosity of the Christian Faith in my illustrious friends—in the Abbé Hauy and in the immortal Ampere.

Many of the Catholic scientists of whom mention has been made were distinguished no less for tender piety, than for strong faith. Volta, for instance, one of the most illustrious, was "as pious as a nun." His devotion to the Blessed Virgin was known to all his acquaintances, who often found him with the rosary in his hands.

St. Hilary of Poitiers

From the "English Franciscan Annals."

IN St. Hilary we find one who was second only to St. Athanasius in his zeal for the Faith in the Divinity of Christ. That zeal, which had won for St. Athanasius the title of the "Father of Orthodoxy," won for St. Hilary the surnames of "the Athanasius of the West," and the "Hammer of Heretics."

St. Hilary was born in Poitiers, in France, according to some, towards the end of the third century, or, as others think, in the early part of the fourth; it is quite certain, however, that his birth took place not later than the year 320. He came of a noble, though pagan, family, receiving in his early years an excellent education, so far as the profane sciences were concerned. To these studies he added that of the Sacred Scriptures, and it was through these studies of the Sacred Writings that he was brought to a knowledge of the truth. He was a married man, and together with his wife, and, some say, one daughter, received Holy Baptism. After his reception, it is said that he lived more the life of a monk, than of a married man. The Faith had reached into Aquitain in the third century, and there was a consider-

able congregation in Poitiers at the time of Hilary's conversion. It is not known for certain whether there was already a Bishop of Poitiers, but the virtues of our Saint made him so beloved and respected by all that, in 350, or 353, he was, by the general acclamation of the faithful, elected Bishop.

At this time, the Arian heresy, which had laid hold of the East, was fast making its way into the Western Church. Saturnius, the Bishop of Arles, was already tainted with this error, but was soon exposed by St. Hilary. Whereupon this Bishop called together a Synod at Beziers, in 356, ostensibly for the purpose of clearing himself of the accusations brought against him by Hilary, but the latter knew that it was rather with the hope of thereby more firmly establishing his heresy, and spreading it far and wide. Consequently, the zealous Bishop presented himself before the assembly, for the purpose of defending the Orthodox Faith. Those who were present were mostly Arians, and it is no wonder that they refused to hear him. Nor did they confine their efforts merely to stopping his mouth in their own assembly, but obtained the influence of the Emperor Constantine, who always leaned toward Arianism, and invariably sided with its supporters, to bring about the exile of Hilary. The Emperor published a rescript, banishing Hilary and the orthodox Bishop Rhodanus of Toulouse, to Phrygia in Asia Minor. During his exile, which lasted nearly four years, Hilary wrote twelve books concerning the Blessed Trinity, to disprove the doctrines of Arianism. Meanwhile, he continued to govern his see as well as he could from a distance. The leisure which his banishment gave him was well utilized in study, especially in a close investigation of the writings and sayings of the leading parties, both on the Orthodox side and amongst the heretics. The conclusion he came to, after careful examination and comparison, was that, in many cases, the differences were more in words and expressions, than in thoughts and ideas, and in his famous Letters to the Bishops of Gaul (in 358, when he likewise wrote to the Bishops of Germany and Britain), he admonishes them to weigh well the utterances of suspected heretics before condemning them. This spirit of fairness and leniency

caused some of the orthodox party, led by one Bishop Lucifer of Cagliari in Sardinia, to condemn Hilary as suspect of leanings towards Arianism.

About the year 359 a synod of Oriental Bishops assembled at Seleucia, in Isuria. The fame of Hilary's learning had gone abroad, and these Bishops were most anxious to see and hear him. An invitation was sent him, and the civil governor offered him assistance for his journey. Hilary accepted the invitation, and attended the synod, where he addressed the assembled Bishops in their own Greek language, of which he had been a great student in his early days. On this occasion, St. Cyril of Jerusalem was present. Hilary fearlessly set forth the orthodox Faith, and proved that the majority of the Bishops of Gaul and the West were orthodox, and by no means tainted with the Sabellian errors. According to the teaching of Sabellius and his followers, there was no distinction between the Persons of the Trinity. Denis of Alexandria says that they had no idea of the Holy Ghost. This and the kindred heresies were all off-shoots of the parent stock, Arianism.

The Greek Bishops present at this synod were divided into two sections: the Semi-Arians, who tended towards and desired compromise with the orthodox party, and the Anomoeans, who were the most violent of the Arian heretics. Amongst this latter class, were two Bishops, called Valens and Ursacius. A great discussion and disputation, in which St. Hilary had part, took place between the two parties. The Semi-Arians, who were in a minority, besought Hilary to act as intermediary between themselves and the Bishops of the Western Church, in the hope of bringing about a mutual agreement, but the majority, led by Valens and Ursacius, strongly opposed Hilary. and, relizing what a power he was likely to become in their midst, asked the Emperor Constantius to remove this source of contention and discord, by sending our Saint back to his diocese in Gaul. The Emperor acceded to their wishes, and thus St. Hilary, much to his joy and consolation, was able to make his way back to his see. In 361 he reached home, and amidst the rejoicings of his flock, took possession of his see of Poitiers once again. Shortly after his return, he was

visited by the saintly Martin, who had been his pupil, and who afterwards was to become Bishop of Tours.

Hilary continued his work of opposition to the heretics, and finally succeeded in obtaining the deposition of the Arian Saturnius, Bishop of Arles. In 364 he went on a visit to Italy, to defend himself against the prejudices which still prevailed there, on account of his leniency towards the Semi-Arians, and whilst there he was the guest of the Bishop of Vercelli. He endeavored to clear himself of the suspicions which his zeal for the return of these heretics to orthodoxy had aroused, and to show, that whilst he was anxious to leave nothing undone to bring about such a reconciliation, if possible, he made it perfectly plain that he would have no part with the irreconcilable heretics. He traveled to Milan to attack openly its Bishop, Auxentius, an obstinate Arian, but he was prevented from obtaining any real satisfaction, by the act of the Emperor, in compelling him to leave Italy and return to his see, which he never left again.

His writings were mostly aimed at the overthrow of Arianism, by a clear exposition of the truth, and whilst, as we have seen, he would be full of mercy and consideration for those who differed from him, provided they were not obstinate, on the other hand, he was true to his name of the "Hammer of Heretics" towards those who showed obstinacy in their opposition to the truth. In his book, "*Liber contra Constantium Augustum*," he gives full vent to his indignation at the Emperor's obstinacy, declaring him to be Antichrist and a rebel against God, "a tyrant whose sole object had been to make a gift to the devil of that world for which Christ had suffered." Towards the end of his life he wrote his famous Commentary on the Psalms. He died in peaceful possession of his see, on January 13, 368. St. Augustine speaks of him as "the illustrious Doctor of the Churches," and in 1851, at the synod of Bordeaux, Pope Pius IX., of holy memory, raised him to the dignity of a Doctor of the Universal Church. His feast is celebrated on the 14th of January.